

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03041 231336Z

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2231

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3041

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (SOLARZ, STEPHEN)

SUBJECT: CODEL SOLARZ

REF: STATE 272580

1. INFORMED FONMIL KHADDAM DECEMBER 22 THAT CONGRESS-
MAN-ELECT SOLARZ PLANS MIDDLE EAST TRIP INCLUDING
ISRAEL AND SYRIA AS WELL AS POSSIBLY JORDAN AND EGYPT.
STATED SOLARZ HAD INFORMED US HE INTERESTED IN STUDYING
MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH USG OF
STATES IN AREA AND STATUS OF JEWISH MINORITIES.
ADVISED FONMIN THAT SOLARZ IS JEWISH AND REPRESENTS
DISTRICT IN WHICH THERE MANY AMERICANS OF SYRIAN JEWISH
ORIGIN. ADDED THAT IF HIS VISIT ACCEPTABLE TO SARG
IN ACCORDANCE NORMAL PRACTICE EMBASSY WOULD EXPECT
COORDINATE WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY APPOINTMENTS AND
ACTIVITIES OF SOLARZ WHILE IN SYRIA.

2. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT AS MATTER OF PRINCIPLE SARG
WELCOMED ANY CONGRESSIONAL VISIT TO SYRIA. SARG CONSIDERS
CONGRESSMAN'S PROPOSED STUDY OF MID EAST PROBLEM, "SINCE
IT CONCERNS WHOLE WORLD AND NEEDS CLOSE STUDY, WOULD
SERVE THE CAUSE OF A JUST PEACE AND HELP THE CONGRESSMAN
BETTER UNDERSTAND ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION AGAINST THE ARABS."
SIMILARLY SARG WOULD BE PLEASED REVIEW SARG-USG BILATERAL
RELATIONS WITH CONGRESSMAN.

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PAGE 02 DAMASC 03041 231336Z

3. AS FAR AS CONGRESSMAN'S "INTEREST IN THE AREA'S SO-

CALLED JEWISH MINORITIES, SARG REJECTS THE IDEA OF ANY STUDY OF THIS SUBJECT AND WOULD CONSIDER IT AS CONSTITUTING INTERFERENCE IN ITS INTERNAL AFFAIRS." KHADDAM SAID THAT CONGRESSMAN'S RAISING THIS SUBJECT IN SYRIA OR ELSEWHERE WOULD ONLY SERVE ZIONIST INTERESTS. FONMIN ASSERTED "THERE NO OPPRESSION OF JEWS IN THIS COUNTRY NOR INDEED ANY MEASURES TAKEN BECAUSE OF ANY SYRIAN CITIZEN'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS." AFFIRMED ALL SYRIAN CITIZENS WERE EQUAL BEFORE SYRIAN LAW AND APPLICATION OF SYRIAN LAW IS SOLELY THE CONCERN OF THE SARG.

4. KHADDAM STRESSED THAT FACT SOLARZ IS JEWISH AND NO BEARING ON SARG'S OBJECTIONS TO HIS SEEKING TO STUDY QUESTION OF SYRIAN JEWS. SARG DOES NOT AND WILL NOT HESITATE TO WELCOME A MAN OF JEWISH FAITH AS VISITOR; RECALLED IN THIS CONNECTION HE, KHADDAM, HAD INVITED SENATOR JAVITS TO VISIT SYRIA LAST SUMMER.

5. FONMIN THEN TOOK SOME RANDOM SHOTS ABOUT THE POOR STATUS OF BLACKS IN AMERICA AND SAID US POLITICIANS COULD BETTER INVEST TIME INVESTIGATING THAT PROBLEM. HE ASSERTED USG WOULD NOT TOLERATE FOREIGNERS POKING INTO SUCH QUESTIONS, BE THOSE FOREIGNERS GREEKS, ITALIANS, SYRIANS OR GUINEANS. I REPLIED THAT AS A MATTER OF FACT A SWEDEN HAD WRITTEN THE CLASSIC STUDY OF AMERICAN BLACKS AND I SAW LITTLE VALUE IN GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT ANY OTHER COUNTRY'S INTERNAL CONDITIONS.

6. SAID I WANTED TO SUM UP WHAT FONMIN HAD TOLD ME: SARG WELCOMES SOLARZ'S INTEREST IN VISITING SYRIA IF CONGRESSMAN WISHED STUDY THE MID EAST PROBLEM AND US-SYRIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. SARG WOULD FIND IT UNACCEPTABLE, HOWEVER, FOR THE CONGRESSMAN TO CONCERN HIMSELF WITH THE STATUS OF THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY. FONMIN AGREED THAT SUMMED UP SARG'S POSITION. HE ADDED ONLY THAT TIMING OF SOLARZ VISIT WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT WITH SYRIAN PARLIAMENTARY OFFICIALS WHO HAVE OVERALL SCHEDULING RESPONSIBILITY FOR VISITS BY FOREIGN POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES.

7. COMMENT: REGRET THAT GIVEN FONMIN'S RECENT TRAVELS
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PAGE 03 DAMASC 03041 231336Z

THIS WAS EARLIEST MEETING I COULD ARRANGE. RE QUESTIONS POSED PARA 6 STATE REFTEL, CONSIDER KHADDAM'S POSITION MAKES CLEAR IT WOULD BE INADVISABLE FOR CONGRESSMAN TO BRING STAFF ASSISTANT WITH HIM IF PURPOSE IS TO FACILITATE MONITORING CONVERSATIONS CONCERNING STATUS OF SYRIAN JEWS. FOR SAME REASON HE SHOULD NOT PLAN BRING LIST OF HIS CONSTITUENTS' RELATIVES IN SYRIA.
MURPHY

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